

Walleyes Unlimited of Montana would like to share the facts about the Fort Peck Multi-Species Warm Water Hatchery with the anglers of Montana.

1. The Fort Peck Multi-Species Warm Water Fish Hatchery was supposed to be just as its name implies. Warm water species were supposed to make up 96% of this hatcheries production with the ability to raise Chinook Salmon as the only cold water fish.

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2. When the project was in its infancy, Walleyes Unlimited of Montana asked Interstate Engineering to do a preliminary design and cost study. Interstate Engineering donated a significant amount of time and money in designing a plan that consisted of approximately 40 rearing ponds and a hatchery building. Their project plan had a cost of \$10 million dollars. Interstate Engineering had designed the expansion project at the Miles City Hatchery so they were very familiar with hatchery costs.
3. Legislation was introduced into the 1999 State Legislature and a bill was passed for a new hatchery at Fort Peck. A \$5.00 Warm Water Game Fish Stamp was designated to pay for the operation and maintenance of the hatchery after its completion. When Walleyes Unlimited of Montana was at the legislative hearings, Pat Graham (who was at that time the Director of FWP) offered to build 10 raceways and 10 rearing ponds if Walleyes Unlimited of Montana would drop this plan. Needless to say, the offer was declined.
4. State legislation mandated that no state funds could be used for this project except for the \$5 stamp money, so the next step was to secure federal funding to pay for the design and construction of the hatchery. Walleyes Unlimited of Montana was able to secure 97 acres of land next to a great water source for the hatchery construction site. The land and the hatchery itself would be owned by the Corp of Engineers and leased to the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks on a long term basis. At the same time, Walleyes Unlimited of Montana had been working with both Senator Burns and Senator Baucus trying to secure funding for the project. Senator Burns drafted the legislation for the proposed warm water hatchery at Fort Peck and Senator Baucus made sure the bill was added to the Water Resources Act of 2000. Walleyes Unlimited of Montana was advised by the Corp that a Field Recon Study would be needed for a plan to design and construct the new hatchery. This study would cost \$250,000, which the Corp would cost share 50%. As we did not have the funding for this study, we asked the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks that if a loan was secured to pay the remaining 50% of the cost study, could stamp funds be used to repay the loan. Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks agreed to allow the stamp fund to repay the loan after the stamp went on sale in 2001. Walleyes Unlimited of Montana secured funding from 16 financial institutions and a telephone cooperative that all received equal shares in the \$125,000 loan. Roughly \$90,000 was repaid by the Walleyes Unlimited of Montana's state Chapters, private citizens, and other sportsman groups. Not by the stamp fund.
5. The Field Recon study projected the cost of the Hatchery would be \$18.7 million dollars (\$8.7 million higher than the preliminary design projection). Walleyes Unlimited of Montana members

questioned the higher cost, but were told that it was the going cost to build a hatchery of this size. In the Field Recon Study there is a list of the actual warm and cool water species to be raised at the hatchery and the amount of each species. Former FWP Director Pat Graham gave testimony at the Field Recon Study on raising warm and cool water fish at the new hatchery. There was not any mention of raising any cold water species other than salmon.

6. The new fish hatchery was authorized by the Federal Congress and Senators Burns and Baucus were able to get \$1.5 million dollars appropriated for the start of the design. At this time, Walleyes Unlimited of Montana was told by the Corp that they could not work with a private entity on the design of the hatchery and that they would have to work with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.
7. In February of 2003, Walleyes Unlimited of Montana got their first look at the new hatchery design. We were very concerned about the over build in the design and voiced our concerns about the problems and extravagance of the design in a meeting with Senator Burns. Senator Burns addressed the concerns with state officials and the response was that it would cost another \$500,000 to change the design.
8. Walleyes Unlimited of Montana requested a meeting with the Corp, Fish Wildlife and Parks, and the Congressional representatives. Fish Wildlife and Parks brought a fact sheet to this meeting titled Questions and Answers for Fort Peck Fish Hatchery. This sheet stated that the state agencies that were to design, construct, and operate the hatchery for the facility's purpose of producing warm and cool water species. It also specifically listed the species that were to be raised as follows: 2.5 million Walleye fingerling, 50 million Walleye fry, 500,000 Sauger fingerlings, 2.5 million Sauger fry, 350,000 Chinook Salmon, Tiger Muskie, Northern Pike, Large and Small Mouth Bass, Channel Catfish, Forage Fish, and the endangered Pallid Sturgeon. The sheet also stated that no other cold water species would be produced as the state law did not provide for the rearing of any other cold water species. This same fact sheet stated that the cost of running the new hatchery would be comparable to the Miles City Hatchery, which was \$315,000 annually. Fish Wildlife and Parks said that they welcomed public input, but all the hatchery design meetings were held in Nebraska and South Dakota and Walleyes Unlimited of Montana members were not notified or invited to any of these meetings.
9. Walleyes Unlimited of Montana did receive a letter from FWP Director, Jeff Hagener, stating that no cold water species other than Chinook Salmon would be raised while he was director.
10. In 2006, the Hatchery was dedicated and the final cost of the Fort Peck Hatchery was \$22.7 million dollars. The over build of the new hatchery comes with another big price tag, the operation and maintenance of the hatchery is now projected to be \$550,000 to \$650,000 annually. Almost twice the amount estimated in the FWP's fact sheet.

11. In 2007, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks appointed a group to address the funding crisis for the operation and maintenance of the Fort Peck Hatchery. At the first meeting the idea of raising cold water species at the hatchery was brought up by the FWP. FWP stated that the hatchery was under utilized and the hatchery staff would have more to do if the hatchery raised cold water fish. Our argument was that the hatchery is still not raising all of the species that it was supposedly designed to and the staff would have plenty to do if it did. The only species raised in 2008 were Walleye, Northern Pike, Chinook Salmon and some Pallid Sturgeon. What happened to the Sauger, Large and Small Mouth Bass, Tiger Muskie, Channel Catfish and the Forage Fish?
12. The Hatchery Bureau Chief presented a slide show to all those concerned that demonstrated hundreds of thousands of trout were to be raised annually at the hatchery. FWP did not have an answer when they were questioned as to where they obtained the authority to design the cold water production facilities in a warm water hatchery. FWP did state that they did not have any input as to the design of the hatchery and that the Corp of Engineers designed and built the hatchery. The Corp of Engineers has a different opinion on this statement

In the near future, anglers from across the state as well as non-residents will be asked to increase their fishing license by \$1 to \$2 per person to fund a project that should not have required any additional funding. Walleyes Unlimited of Montana is opposed to any efforts by the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks to change the designation of species to be raised at the hatchery or to any increases in the cost of angler fishing licenses. The Warm Water Stamp, along with available federal funding sources (such as Wallop Breaux), should be more than adequate to fund the designated production of the Fort Peck Fish Hatchery.

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Fish, Wildlife & Parks				
Hatchery O&M Funding - FY 2008				
Hatchery Program	General License	WB	Warm Water	Other Federal
Flathead Lake	36,952	110,932		
Washoe Park	56,764	170,976		
Jocko	54,460	136,617		
Giant Springs	70,410	211,662		
Big Springs	121,878	290,325		
Yellowstone River	56,343	85,143		
BlueWater Springs	62,329	186,989		
Miles City	107,851	323,551		
Ft. Peck			401,269	
Murray Springs				227,189
TOTALS	\$ 566,987	\$ 1,516,195	\$ 401,269	\$ 227,189